

MATTHEW 3, 13 – 17

The account of Jesus' baptism is very familiar, although many of us, baptised in our very early years, will have no recollection of our own baptism. But the baptism of Christ shows us just how central it is to our Christian life. For Jesus it heralds the start of his ministry; the Holy Spirit descends upon him and he receives the blessing of the Father. And after his resurrection and prior to his ascension into heaven, Jesus exhorts his disciples to 'go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit'.

Baptism marks the start of our commitment to Christ. Through it we are cleansed of our sins and receive God's forgiveness. We commit ourselves to living in the way God wants.

But what does this entail? It has both an inward and outward dimension. Prayer is the bedrock of our relationship with Christ. We often focus on prayer as our way of talking to Christ. In Sunday School, we have used the letters TSP, so often seen as an abbreviation in recipes, as a way of focusing our prayers – thank you, sorry, please – and even holding a teaspoon to still our hands as an aid to concentration. But prayer is two way; we need to listen to Christ, not just to talk at him.

Be honest; how often do we do that in our prayers? And when we do listen, how often do we ignore what we hear?

But however secure our personal relationship with the risen Lord is, it is pointless if we do not live our faith. We must serve Him in practical ways, by reaching out to those in need, by random acts of love and kindness, by helping our neighbours. And in these challenging times, that is more important than ever.

In the words of John Wesley:

Do all the good you can,
By all the means you can,
In all the ways you can,
In all the places you can,
At all the times you can,
To all the people you can,
As long as you can.